



Thousands Take Action to Change the World

Second annual event already being planned

More than 100,000 people from over 1,000 churches united with a common purpose over a 48-hour period: to make a world of difference in ways both large and small. United Methodists from 13 countries and every state in the U.S. energetically worked to build community locally and fight malaria globally during *Change the World* weekend, April 24-25, 2010.

Congregations at local churches rolled up their sleeves and took to the streets to feed the hungry, aid the homeless, visit the lonely, and more. From stocking food pantries and cleaning school grounds to washing cars and renovating homes, people of faith reached out to a world outside the four walls of their own churches. They did it with work crews, talent shows, candlelight vigils, picnics, sleep-outs, food drives, and more.

“The people of The United Methodist Church were on a mission to change the

world in a hands-on kind of way—and we made an impact,” said the Rev. Larry Hollon, General Secretary of United Methodist Communications.

In fact, said Hollon, enthusiasm for the 2010 *Change the World* event was so great that it will become an annual event. “Churches are already gearing up for round two of *Change the World*,” he said.

Next year’s event will be held May 14-15, 2011.

The *Change the World* event was created as part of the Rethink Church campaign by United Methodist Communications in partnership with the United Methodist Publishing House and Imagine No Malaria. The concept for *Change the World* originated with the Rev. Mike Slaughter, lead pastor at Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, and author of *Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus*.

“What we have discovered through our radically missional focus on changing the world is that people truly want to be part of something bigger than themselves—they just need to be asked,” said Karen Smith, director of communications

and global initiatives for Ginghamburg Church.

“You throw out the challenge. Give them the opportunity. And they’re going to go for it,” she said. “And they find out in the process that their own lives are just as much or more transformed than those they are serving.”

The 150-member congregation at Faith United Parish in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, is one of the many congregations that took up the challenge. During *Change the World*, they worked with the local state college to paint and fix up an aging middle school in their community. The transformation included refurbishing an inoperable historic theater in the school that is once again being used for student productions.

“For us, *Change the World* was significant because we partnered with others in the community and were able to do far more together than we would have been able to do on our own,” said the Rev. Justin Hildebrandt.

To aid churches in planning and promoting *Change the World* events, United Methodist Communications produced international resources in ten languages, sermon starters in five languages, and advertisements in three languages. Participants shared their stories on Facebook and Twitter. And a Google Earth map regularly lit up with the location of churches, districts, and conferences as they signed on to commit to making the world a better place.

In addition to the *Change the World* worldwide event, the denomination formally launched the Imagine No Malaria campaign on the afternoon of World Malaria Day, April 25, in Austin, Texas. Over 2,000 people turned out to celebrate, and many more joined in online to help kick off continued efforts to eliminate death and suffering from malaria in Africa by 2015. Thousands of people attended events in Lubumbashi and Kamina in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where they learned how to prevent malaria and use bed nets to save lives. The people of The United Methodist Church joined with partner organizations to distribute 30,000 insecticide-treated bed nets in the area.

With a goal of \$75 million, Imagine No Malaria has already surpassed the \$10 million milestone in giving for malaria. The United Methodist Publishing House contributed \$50,000 to Imagine No Malaria, representing 5 percent of Cokesbury sales from April 7-10.

—Diane Degnan (UMCom)

Mark your calendar!
May 14-15, 2011